

Policy Implementation in Collaborative Watershed Management: A Multi-case Study in Washington State

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Researcher Background

- **Graduate student at the University of Washington:**
 - *Master of Science*: School of Environmental & Forest Sciences
 - *Master of Public Administration*: Daniel J. Evans School of Public Policy & Governance
- **Research and professional interests:**
 - Environmental policy, specifically land use and water resource management
 - Collaborative governance
 - Policy implementation & program evaluation
- **Conducting this project as the capstone/thesis for my degree programs**

Research Rationale & Questions

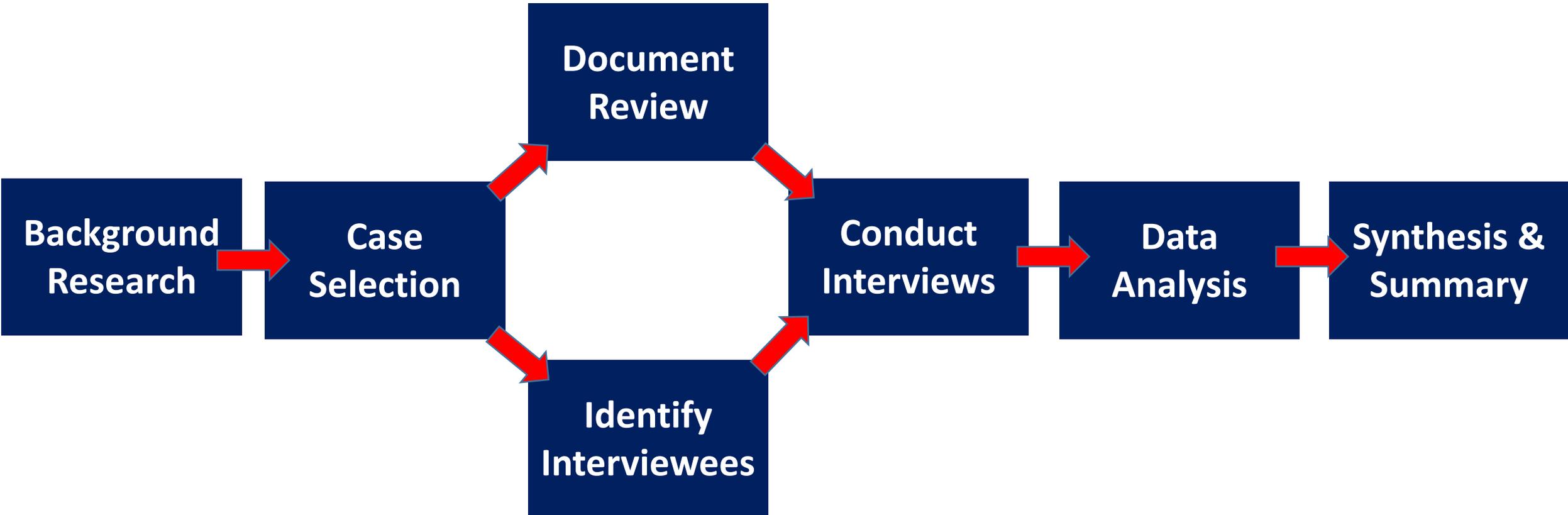
Rationale:

- Collaborative watershed management is a prominent & important governance strategy
- Received a great deal of attention from academics & practitioners
- Opportunities to learn more about implementation and long-term sustainability

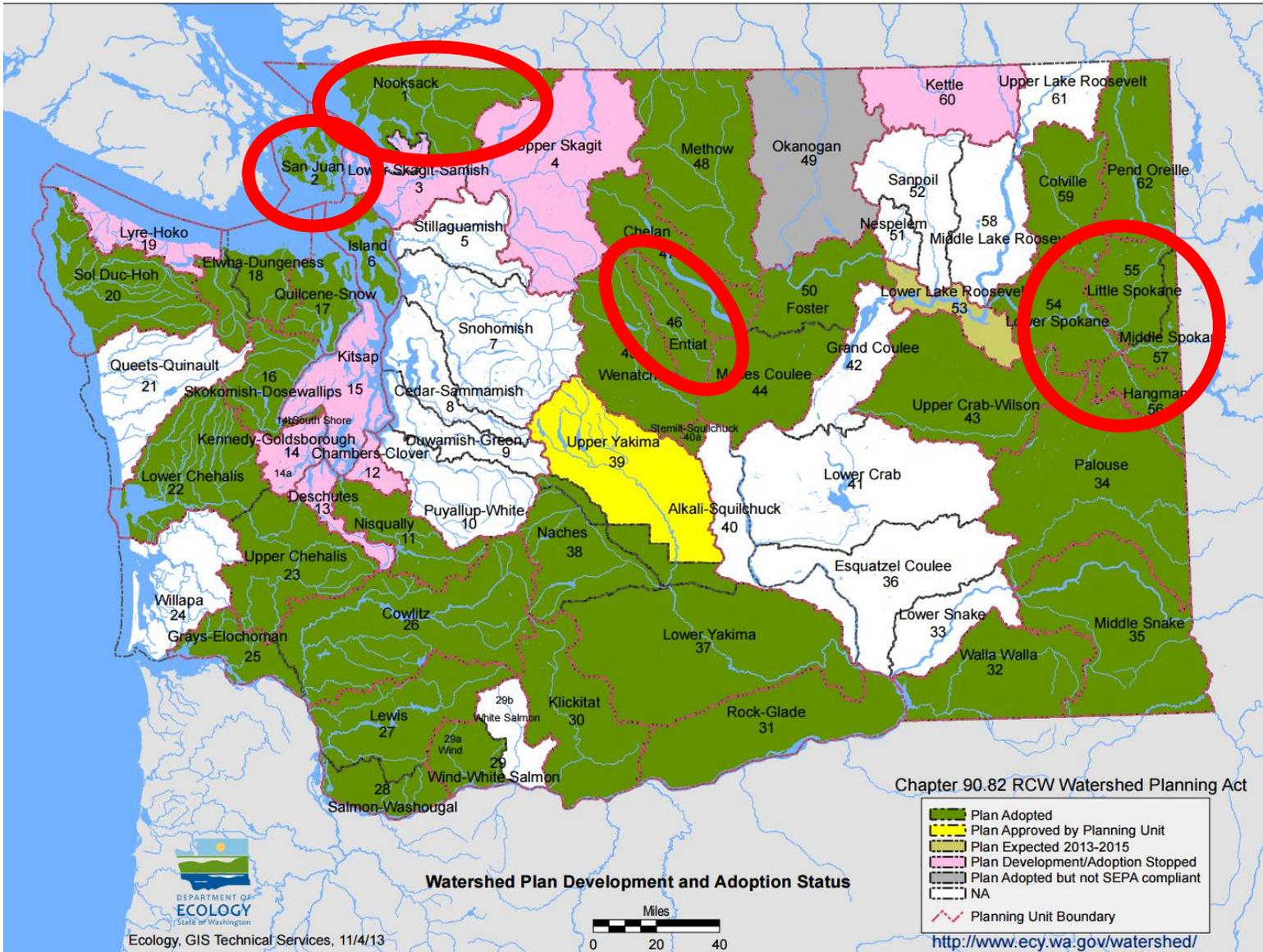
Questions:

- What factors have helped and hindered the implementation of Watershed Management Plans?
- How have participants used the Plans in their implementation work?
- How have the Planning Units (or equivalents) contributed to implementation?
- What types of strategies do these efforts use to enhance their sustainability of longevity, particularly in the face of funding scarcity?

Project Methodology



Cases



	HIGH Population	LOW Population
WESTERN WA	Nooksack (WR 1)	San Juan (WR 2)
EASTERN WA	Entiat (WR 46)	Spokane River (WRs 54-57)

Qualitative Interviews

Structure & methods:

- Core set of free-response questions
- Opportunity for specific follow-up probes
- Duration: 40 minutes to 2 hours per interview
- Audio recorded w/interviewee's permission

Interviewee selection:

- 5-7 purposively interviewees per area
- Consultation w/Lead Agency staff, plus my own exploration
- People with knowledge of planning effort from a range of perspectives:
 - Landowners
 - Agency officials
 - Private water systems
 - Agriculture
 - Other water user groups
 - Environmental/land conservation groups

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis techniques:

- Rooted in social science research methodology
- Software assistance: Nvivo Pro 11
- Coding, text searches, concept mapping

Content analysis:

- Coding interview data to content categories
- Identification of concepts, themes, patterns, & connections
- Constant comparison
- Consolidation, restructuring, and hierarchical organization

Results & Preliminary Analysis

A quick word on definitions:
“Collaborative planning effort”

Factors that have influenced the
implementation of the study areas'
Watershed Management Plans

Focus on the Entiat

Importance of:

- Commitment/support/buy-in from landowners
- Ongoing participation from, and dialogue between, landowners, agencies, & others
- Communication & outreach to the broader community
 - Keeping residents informed about project installation & monitoring
 - Spreading the word about what the EWPU is doing and why it's important
- Communication among EWPU members and other project partners:
 - Sharing ideas, goals, and giving input on proposed projects
 - Keeping each other informed about project work, administrative decisions, etc.
- Activities/programs that spread information or improve communication are helpful!

Focus on the Entiat (continued)

Linkages between communication, relationships, awareness, participation, and commitment/support

Other key challenge: Turnover and attrition

Key area for improvement: Better communication & outreach to new landowners. There's a need to increase the level of awareness & engagement from this group

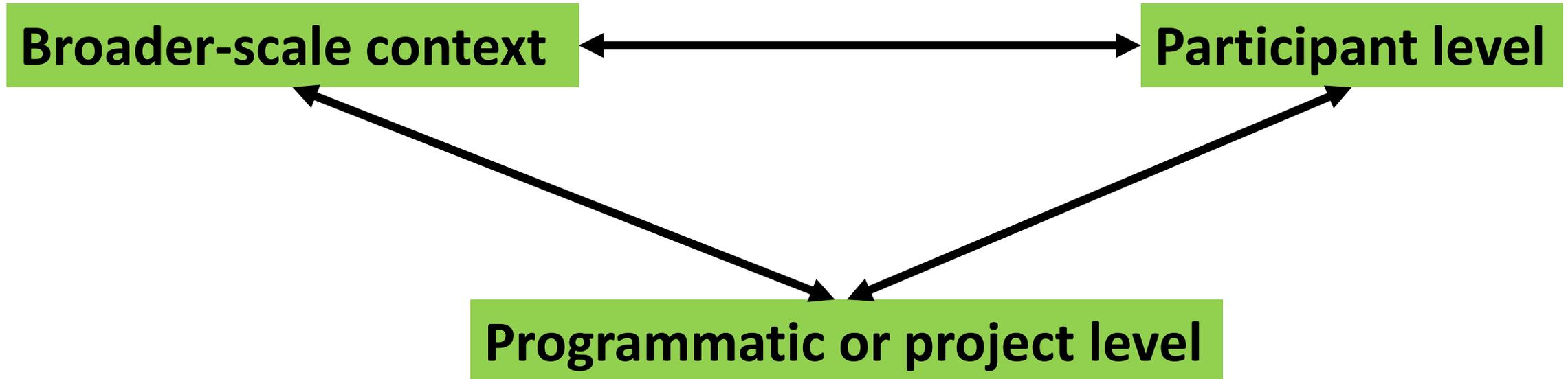
Findings From All Cases Combined

Broader-scale context

Participant level

Programmatic or project level

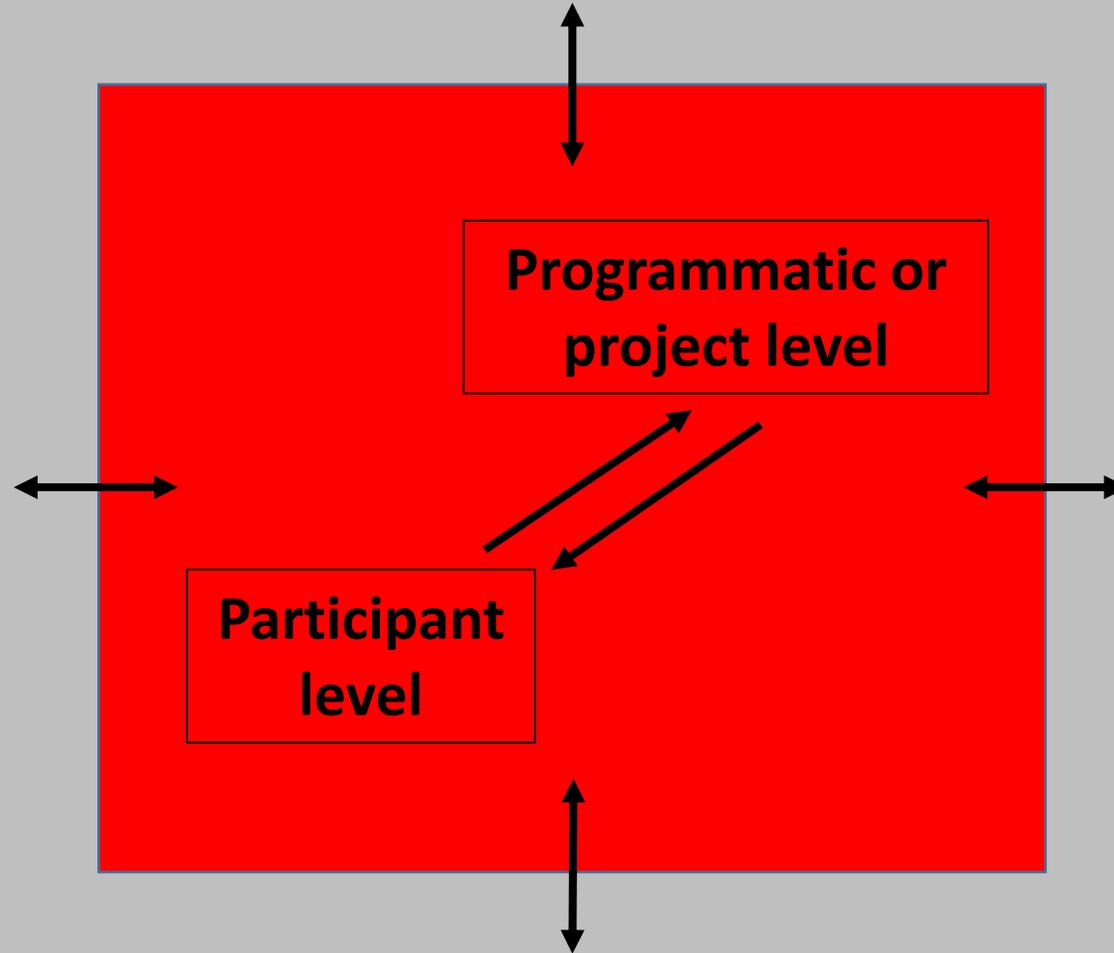
Findings From All Cases Combined



Broader-scale context

- **Hydrologic and environmental characteristics**
- **Socioeconomic characteristics**
- **Larger-scale (regional, statewide) laws and planning/management efforts**
- **Regional or statewide political landscape**
- **Motivators or focusing events**
- **Judicial decisions**

Broader-scale context



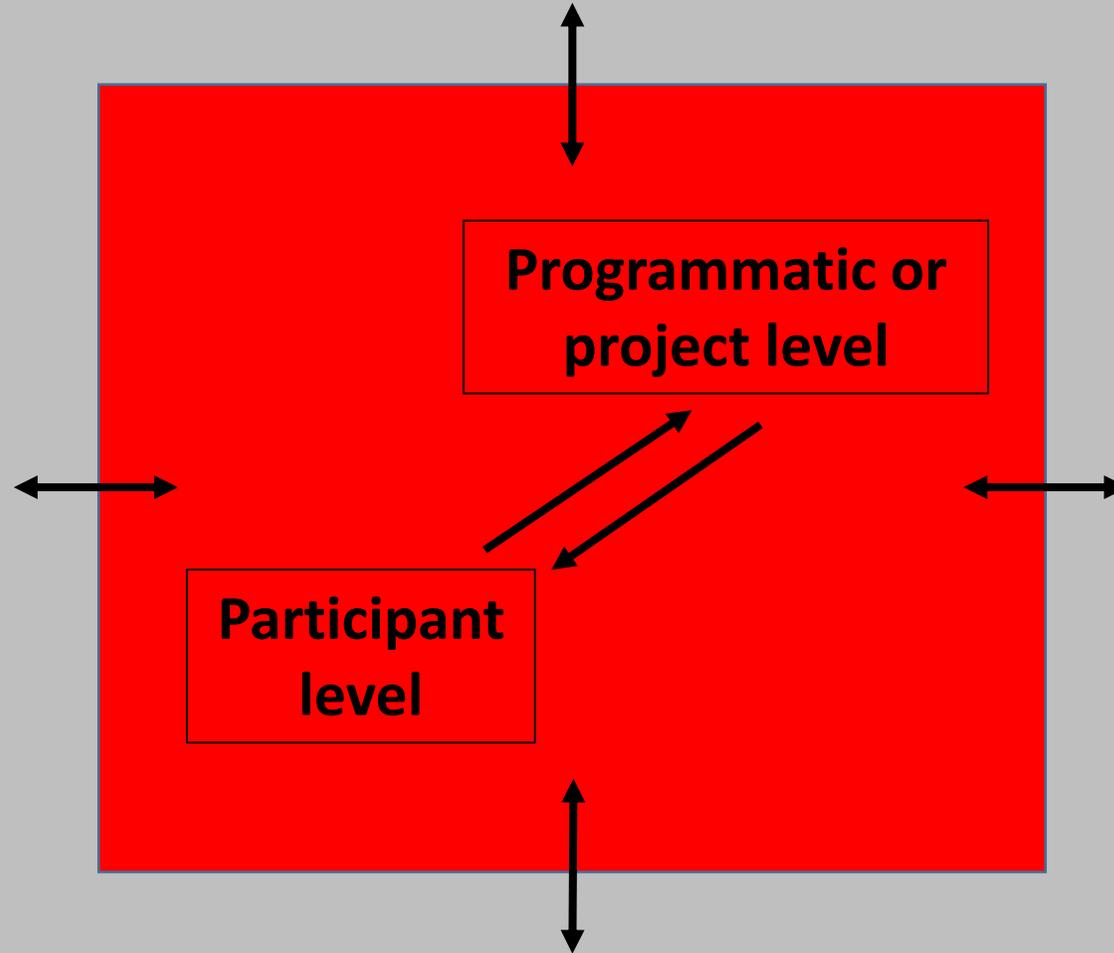
Programmatic or project level:

- **Funding**
- **Availability/access to data**
- **Layout/contents of Plans and choice of project, program, or policy**
- **Group structure & rules**

Participant level:

- **Who is involved: interests, behaviors, contributions**
 - **Leadership**
 - **Facilitation**
 - **Knowledge, technical expertise, and community perspectives,**
 - **The “right people” at the “right time”**
- **Support or commitment (or lack thereof) from stakeholders**
- **Interactions: relationships & communication**
 - **Cooperation, open & respectful dialogue**
 - **Joint decision-making and coordination for projects**
 - **Communication to community & wider network**

Broader-scale context



Let's return to the Entiat...

Use of the WRIA 46 Management Plan (2004)

All interviewees-Plan used for reference or guidance:

- Selection or identification of projects
- Guidance for higher-level management strategies or setting priorities
- Details for carrying out specific activities

Declining use or importance:

- Time elapsed since creation
- Prominence of the IMW Plan
- 2004 Plan is not the only framework informing watershed management decisions

Another area for improvement: revisit and re-evaluate the 2004 Plan:

- What goals/recommendations have we completed?
- What were the outcomes of that work?
- What should we do next?
- Do we need to change any of the information & recommendations in the Plan?

Use of the 2004 Plan (continued)

Besides the planning documents, two other factors driving implementation decision-making:

- Funding: How much? When is it available? What kinds of projects are eligible?
- Input from technical experts & community members

Trends across all watersheds:

- Plans used in similar guidance/reference capacities
- Funding strongly affects Plan use and implementation decision-making
- Participant input and joint decision-making continues to be important
- Plans can help “justify” projects to decision-makers or funders:
 - Shows community consensus or support
 - Evidence of relevance to resource needs

Representation & membership on the EWPU

Continued participation from landowners and agencies is important!

Generally, all of the relevant interests (groups who ought to be at the table) are present, but:

- Need to get more turnout/involvement from new residential landowners
- Low attendance from some other organizations can present a challenge

Connections between membership and implementation across all cases:

- Input & decision-making
- Communication & coordination
- Commitment
- Meeting logistics: scheduling, location, and notification!

Questions?

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